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Irreconcilable differences: a sad reality of today's politics

Steve Bakke  June 8, 2021



“The Big Lie,” or “große Lüge,” was a term coined by Adolf Hitler as he dictated his 1925 book “*Mein Kampf*.” Of course, democrats couldn’t wait to hang “The Big Lie” label on actions taken by Trump and his supporters to uncover voter irregularities in the 2020 election.

A few years ago, political research scholar David Davenport penned an article titled “Congress and The Lost Art of Compromise.” Within that title are included several “sub-arts”: civility, bipartisanship, courage, and so on. His simple, accurate comments stuck with me.

I recalled Davenport’s assertions when, several days ago, a local educator was sufficiently disappointed by my May 23 Waterloo Courier Guest Opinion that he wrote a Guest Opinion of his own. It appeared on June 2, titled “GOP also peddling the “Little Lie.”

Disagreement with my opinions is expected, but hanging the “liar” label on my words compelled a reaction. Referencing the “lost art” theory, the current state of political affairs operates under the unwritten rule that many political ideologues will determine in advance those issues which will forever be “unreconcilable differences” with their political adversaries. Under no circumstances of collegiality will those preordained disagreements disappear.

Perhaps the offended educator suffers from that type of intransigence. My article wasn’t intended to be an ideological policy statement, nor a conservative “buckling-under” to progressive wisdom (of which I’ve been accused). Rather, it was simply my opinion. It was intended to be readily identified as a conservative expressing a reasonable and politely collegial message. Yet, that message was labeled a “lie.”

The offended writer stated: “Bakke will not admit the election was free and honest.....” My sins would have been redeemed had I simply stated that the 2020 election was one of the “cleanest” ever. I purposely avoided any assertion of fairness or unfairness. I sought middle ground to get beyond that issue, hoping to create an atmosphere in which fair and necessary election controls can be discussed.

Addressing Trump supporters, I pointed out: “Post-election lawsuits failed because complex claims of material fraud couldn’t be fairly and conclusively addressed given the evidence

available.....” I suggested Republicans “stop wasting energy jousting at windmills of ‘stolen elections’Joe Biden is President.” I asked Democrats to “quit resisting fair and necessary election controls that are the foundation of fair, honest elections.....voter identification and ballot control.” (Fair, balanced, and reasonable so far, don’t you think?)

I wonder which statements the offended writer considers “lies.” Here are other major points:

- “Many Republicans have trouble accepting some election realities, and many Democrats struggle with others.”
- “.....expressing the sentiment that problems occurred in 2020 is not a crackpot conspiracy theory.....[because] controls were reduced in 2020 due to COVID concerns.”
-“controls must be established in advance of problems. Otherwise, minor mischief inevitably grows into significant problems.”
- “.....human nature, combined with opportunity and a righteous desire to win, makes election mischief inevitable.”
- Proposed federal election rules I’m concerned with include.....“prohibiting voter identification requirements; allowing voters without IDs to merely provide written declaration of eligibility; allowing, even promoting, bulk distribution of unsolicited mail-in ballots.....”
- Joe Biden foolishly equated state voter identification rules with Jim Crow requirements for Black voters to accurately estimate the number of jellybeans in a jar.
- “.....the rush to federalize election reform, rather than sharing responsibility with the states” is both a political strategy and a foolish mistake.
- “The United States will be forever diminished if election integrity and voter confidence deteriorate further.”

The unhappy educator supports Federal election reform legislation, H.R.1 and S.1. I happen to disagree, but it’s fine for him to believe that. However, he made a serious mistake by falling into the political bad habit of labeling as a lie an opinion he merely disagrees with.

Professor Emeritus Thomas Hill, regarding political name-calling, please mind your manners and dial back your apparent propensity to conflate lies with mere differences of political opinion. I admire the sincerity in your opinion, but it’s cheapened by your apparent decision to manipulate readers’ opinions by cleverly lighting an emotional fuse – the “liar” label.

I disagree with your opinion on federalizing elections, but I’m in touch with my human flaws, and I just might be mistaken. Clarity promotes understanding. I hope I’ve made myself clear.